

The Tribes of Albania and Montenegro

(peligones). Lychnidis, the Roman name for the lake of Ochrida, is ⁶²²possibly the Albanian "Licheni," a lake. And the Molotti, or Molosai, ⁶²³may mean mountain men, as does the Albanian Maltso, from Malta mountains. (Usually incorrectly spelt Malessori, an Italianized form, it being against the principles of Italian to put "It" together.)

The Romans drove the Illyrian tribes into rugged ground. Similarly ¹⁷⁵in North Albania of to-day the tribes owe their continued existence in a great part to the mountains. Conquerors always take the fat lands, ¹⁷⁴leaving the lean to the conquered—if they leave them any. That many descendants of the ancient people survived is shown by the tradition to-day in the mountains that "Latini" or "Pagani" or "Anas" were living on the lands when the ancestors of the present tribes arrived. "Anas" is Albanian for "indigenous."

Roughly speaking, the man who tilled the soil and who herded beasts ¹⁷⁵has been rudely displaced three times on the west side of the Balkan peninsula. (1) By the invading Roman. (2) By the invading Serb. (3) By the invading Turk.

The history of the present tribes is mainly that of the third displacement. Each tribe has a tale of origin. Unfortunately first the Balkan wars of 1912-13 and then the Great War interrupted and ended my work before I had collected them all. I give such details as I gathered.

The Albanian tribe (Fis) descends from one male ancestor (or several). ⁶¹⁹All persons tracing descent from the same male ancestor, no matter how distant, are reckoned "brothers and sisters," and are not intermarriage-^[582]able. The law of exogamy is most strictly observed. The heads of families know by heart surprisingly long pedigrees—knowledge of ^[628]great importance, as both marriage and blood vengeance are regulated by consanguinity. We may be certain that groups which will not ⁵⁸²intermarry have in truth a common male ancestor. Women do not ⁶⁰²count. The child, I was told, has none of its mother's blood. Whence ⁶¹¹it follows that tribes which continually intermarry because they have not a common male ancestor are, in fact, often very closely related on the female side, having given daughters to, and taken wives from, each other for generations. But they jeered at me heartily when I suggested this.

Tribal instinct is far stronger than Church law. Many of these ⁷⁷⁹exogamous tribes are Catholic. The Catholic Church prohibits the ⁵⁸²marriage of second cousins—but no further. I asked an Albanian Franciscan, a tribesman himself, how he reconciled this with his strongly expressed opinion that to marry "one's own blood," however remote, was incest. "Suppose some fourth or fifth cousins asked you to marry them, could you, as priest, refuse?" He was much upset.

This want of restrictions may be attributed, partly to the smaller emphasis which south Albanians lay on descent in the male line, partly to the greater store which, probably under Greek influence, they set on relationships in general. North Albanians, when sent to work in south Albania, always expressed lively astonishment when they found, for instance, a southerner claiming as a relative a man who was only the brother of his wife's brother. 628* 184 [611] [602] •

It occasionally happens that a young widow with a son remarried in another family, who probably lived in another village or even district, and had a son by her second husband. Almost without exception the son by her first husband remained with his father's family, so that the two boys grew up apart. Even if the first son accompanied his mother on her remarriage, he had at an early age to return to his father's family. There never was any doubt that the two boys belonged to different households. They recognized each other as brothers, however, and if one was killed, the other had as much right as a full brother on the father's side to avenge him. But if either wished to avenge another male in the other's household, he could only do so by joining an expedition led by the master of that household; he could not do so independently, for except to his half-brother he was an outsider. 628* [587] [768] [595]

'Women do not have rifles' ran the Kanùn. As a corollary 'Women do not have blood feuds', it continued. One result of these Kanùns was that women could not properly avenge their murdered relatives. It was also recognized that they were generally too timorous to do so. A few 'strong characters', however, had been known to lay aside their feminine fears and to kill an enemy. Thus the virgin Emin of Orenjë in Çermenikë avenged her father. When he was killed she was still in the cradle and as she grew up she became aware that her four cousins, the only males left in the family, did not show too much zeal in avenging him. When she was fifteen, she secretly bought a rifle and, seeing the enemy one day come within range of the windows of her home, she fired at him and killed him with the third shot. Then her cousins were trebly annoyed. She, a woman, had proved herself their superior in courage; for her crime one of their lives was forfeit; and they had hoped to compound the feud without further bloodshed, a hope she had destroyed. In fact, she had embittered the feud by putting the enemy to the shame of losing a relative at a woman's hands. Again, a woman from Tërbaç, near Elbasan, hearing that her son 562* 628*